

What is claimed is:

1 1. A playback apparatus for optical discs, comprising:
2 a judging unit operable to judge whether a disc region
3 code assigned to an optical disc matches an apparatus region
4 code assigned to the playback apparatus;
5 a reading unit operable to read a content identifier of
6 a content recorded on the optical disc; and
7 a playback unit operable to, (i) when the judging unit
8 judges in the affirmative, play back the content, and (ii) when
9 the judging unit judges in the negative, not play back the content
10 except when an exceptional playback is authorized, wherein
11 the exceptional playback is authorized when a combination
12 of the content identifier read by the reading unit and the
13 apparatus region code satisfies a predetermined condition
14 defined by a right owner of the content.

1 2. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, further comprising
2 a transmitting unit operable to transmit an authorization
3 request to a server apparatus, the authorization request
4 indicating the combination of the content identifier and the
5 apparatus region code, wherein
6 when the predetermined condition is satisfied, the server
7 apparatus transmits an authorization response in reply to the

8 authorization request, and

9 when the predetermined condition is not satisfied, the
10 server apparatus transmits a non-authorization response.

1 3. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein

2 the server apparatus has a playback authorization list
3 that includes combinations of a content identifier and a region
4 code, the combinations each indicating that a content identified
5 with the content identifier is allowed to be played back in a
6 region identified with the region code in the combination, and
7 the predetermined condition is satisfied when the
8 playback authorization list includes the transmitted
9 combination of the content identifier and the apparatus region
10 code.

1 4. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein

2 the server apparatus has a plurality of pieces of date/time
3 information each indicating, in correspondence with
4 combinations of a content identifier and a region code, a release
5 date/time of a content identified with the content identifier
6 for a region identified with the region code,
7 the authorization request transmitted from the
8 transmitting unit to the server apparatus includes a combination
9 of (i) a current time in a region to which the playback apparatus

10 belongs, (ii) the content identifier of the content to be played
11 back, and (iii) the apparatus region code, and
12 the predetermined condition is satisfied when the current
13 time included in the authorization request is past the release
14 date/time indicated in such a piece of date/time information
15 that has a same combination of the content identifier and the
16 region code as included in the authorization request.

1 5. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein
2 the server apparatus has a plurality of pieces of
3 distributor information each indicating, in correspondence with
4 combinations of a content identifier and a region code, a
5 contributor for a region identified with the region code,
6 the authorization request transmitted from the
7 transmitting unit to the server apparatus includes a combination
8 of (i) the content identifier of the content to be played back,
9 (ii) the apparatus region code, and (iii) the disc region code,
10 and

11 the predetermined condition is satisfied when a
12 distributor indicated in a first piece of distributor information
13 matches a distributor indicated in a second piece of distribution
14 information, the first piece of distributor information having
15 a same combination of the content identifier and the apparatus
16 region code as included in the authorization request, and the

17 second piece of distributor information having a same combination
18 of the content identifier and the disc region code as included
19 in the authorization request.

1 6. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein
2 the authorization response is transmitted from the server
3 apparatus along with accompanying information that includes (i)
4 rating information in a country to which the playback apparatus
5 belongs, (ii) subtitle data and audio data in a language used
6 in the country to which the playback apparatus belongs, and
7 the exceptional playback is performed using the
8 accompanying information.

1 7. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein
2 the authorization response is transmitted from the server
3 apparatus along with restriction information,
4 the content includes a digital stream recorded on the
5 optical disc,
6 the restriction information is one of (i) information
7 that indicates part of the digital stream as a playback section
8 and (ii) information that causes only part of elementary streams
9 multiplexed onto the digital stream to be played back, and
10 the exceptional playback is performed using the
11 restriction information.

1 8. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein
2 the playback apparatus has a playback authorization list
3 that includes combinations of a content identifier and a region
4 code, the combinations each indicating that a content identified
5 with the content identifier is allowed to be played back in a
6 region identified with the region code in the combination, and
7 the predetermined condition is satisfied when the
8 playback authorization list includes a combination of the content
9 identifier of the content recorded on the optical disc and the
10 apparatus region code.

1 9. The playback apparatus of Claim 8, wherein
2 the optical disc has a plurality of contents recorded
3 thereon, and
4 the content identifiers included in the playback
5 authorization list are content identifiers of part of the
6 plurality of contents.

1 10. The playback apparatus of Claim 8, wherein
2 each of the combinations in the playback authorization
3 list has a piece of exclusion information attached thereto
4 indicating whether an exceptional playback of a content
5 identified with the content identifier in the combination is
6 exclusive or non-exclusive,

7 the exceptional playback is exclusive when an
8 authorization for exceptional playback is provided exclusively
9 for contents recorded on an optical disc to which the region
10 code in the combination is assigned, and

11 the exceptional playback is non-exclusive when an
12 authorization for exceptional playback is provided also for one
13 or more other contents that are recorded on another optical disc
14 to which another region code besides the region code in the
15 combination is assigned.

1 11. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein
2 the playback apparatus has a playback authorization list
3 that includes a plurality of pieces of date/time information
4 each indicating (i) a content identifier of a content, (ii) a
5 region code that identifies a region in which the content is
6 sold, and (iii) a release date/time of the content in the
7 identified region, and

8 the predetermined condition is satisfied when a current
9 time is past the release date/time indicated in such a piece
10 of date/time information that includes the combination of the
11 read content identifier and the apparatus region code.

1 12. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein
2 the playback apparatus has a playback authorization list

3 that includes a plurality of pieces of distributor information
4 each indicating, in correspondence with combinations of a content
5 identifier and a region code, a contributor for a region
6 identified with the region code, and
7 the predetermined condition is satisfied when a
8 distributor indicated in such a piece of distributor information
9 that includes the combination of the read content identifier
10 and the apparatus region code matches a distributor indicated
11 in such a piece of distributor information that includes a
12 combination of the read content identifier and the disc region
13 code.

1 13. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein
2 an exception schedule flag is recorded on the optical
3 disc,
4 the playback apparatus performs the exceptional playback
5 when the exception schedule flag indicates that the optical disc
6 is allowed to be played back, and
7 the playback apparatus does not perform the exceptional
8 playback when the exception schedule flag indicates that the
9 optical disc is prohibited from being played back.

1 14. A server apparatus comprising:
2 a storing unit storing therein a playback authorization

3 management table that includes combinations of a content
4 identifier and a region code, the combinations each indicating
5 that a content identified with the content identifier is allowed
6 to be played back in a region identified with the region code
7 in the combination;

8 a receiving unit operable to receive an authorization
9 request transmitted from a playback apparatus;

10 a judging unit operable to obtain, out of the authorization
11 request, a region code of a region to which the playback apparatus
12 belongs and a content identifier of a content that is requested
13 to be played back and judge whether the obtained combination
14 of the content identifier and the region code exists in the
15 playback authorization management table; and

16 a transmitting unit operable to, when the combination
17 exists in the playback authorization management table, transmit
18 an authorization response to the playback apparatus.